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I.

INFANT ACTING THE RESULT OF CERTAIN MENTAL ENDOWMENTS.

Dr. Spurzheim, although he has not said so in any of his lectures, stated lately, in conversation, that to mimickry, where acting or personating is necessary, Secretiveness is essential. Dr. Gall, when he published his great work, thought that Imitation alone constituted the talent of mimickry and personation.—Vol. v., p. 331. Dr. G. does not fail to observe what he calls the *irresistible impulse* which supplies the stage with performers, and states, in confirmation, that almost all great actors gave up other occupations for the theatre. Garrick left the counting-house of a merchant to join a company of strolling players. Lekain was originally a surgeon's instrument maker. Clairon was a coachmaker; Moliere, the son of a *valet de chambre patissier* of the king, and brought up to the same occupation, which he quitted, impelled by an irresistible passion for the stage; and Corneille was destined for the bar. In farther proof of this passion being the result of a primitive impulse, Dr. G. adduces the curious though very common cases of infant performers, who astonish us with their theatrical powers, when they are not only uneducated, but have not nearly arrived at the maturity of their intellectual faculties. He mentions Henry West Betty, the famous Young Roscius, and we may add the still more wonderful Clara Fisher. Nothing short of an instinct, which, without the aid of reason, goes infallibly to its end, however arduous, can account for Clara Fisher's *former* performance of Richard III. We say former; for, when we saw her last winter, her acting of that most difficult of parts was become a different and altogether inferior exhibition. Betty, too, is no Roscius as a man. If we were asked to account, on phrenological principles, for this falling off,—the too common fate of precocious talent, but most of all of the histrionic,—we should impute it to the joint effect of injury to the organs by premature exercise, and distraction of their formerly undistracted and instinctive application, by the exercise of other powers to which education is more immediately addressed.

What we have now and formerly said of the histrionic results of the combination of Imitation and Secretiveness, especially when operating by a pure instinct at a very early age, is so satisfactorily confirmed by the case of Miss W., a very young lady whom we lately saw in London, that an account of it, we trust, will form an acceptable conclusion to this paper.

When visiting Mr. and Mrs. W., we were requested to look at the head of their eldest daughter, a child between ten and eleven years of age, and to say if we found in it an indication of talents or dispositions in any degree uncommon. In an admirable organization, both intellectual and moral, and which we were right in predicating would give both excellent dispositions and abilities, Imitation and Secretiveness were too prominent to leave us for a moment in doubt as to the talent which must have most arrested the attention of her parents; and their surprise, in ignorance of the simple signs which we read, may be judged of, when we answered, that their daughter was a most perfect mimic and imitator; and, more particularly, that, if she had ever been to the theatre, her favorite imitations would be dramatic. Impatient to verify this piece of absolute sorcery, our friends desired their little girl to give us a specimen. With great readiness she took her station at the opposite end of the drawing-room, while her mother sat down to the piano-forte, and played a recitative prelude. This indicated that we were to transport ourselves to the Opera-house, and imagine the *Prima Donna* before us. The child was immediately in a series of the most graceful and impassioned attitudes in the high tragedy style, while she vented her feelings in corresponding strains of recitative, with words to suit, which we were some minutes before we discovered to be her own *imitation* of Italian,—of which language she knew not a word,—but which, in both sound and sense, would have been quite adequate to all the duty of the King's Theatre with nineteen-twentieths of the opera-goers. She advanced, knelt, wept, and supplicated,—then rapidly retreated, indignantly and hurriedly rejecting, as it were, some unwelcome and unworthy proffer; —again advanced, singing a bolder strain, and assuming the towering attitude of command, while the *words* were all of the most magniloquent mouth-filling Italian. No practised actress could have exceeded this child in dignified, graceful, and altogether suitable attitudes and movements, or in better adaptation of the tones of voice to the passion meant to be portrayed. Suddenly she changed her character, and advanced with all the tripping liveliness of Allegro herself,—danced in the most attractive opera manner, and executed, with uncommon ease and grace, the steps and attitudes, and even pirouettings, of the ballet. Her dancing, we were informed by her parents, had rather fallen off since she had been put into the hands of the dancing-master for more *regular* training.* Our juvenile performer had not confined herself to imitation of the Donnas and Figurantes of the Opera; for she now assumed the Buffo, and went through all the chatterings, and grimaces, and contortions, of that impressive person, in a very superior manner.

It was now time to ask how such an infant had come by all this; and we were informed that her operatic history was this:—She had, when scarcely nine years old, been one night taken to the Opera, and was observed to give a very steady and fixed attention to the performance. The impression was, however, never believed to be deep or lasting, as she said little about what she had seen, and for *four months* the Opera seemed to be forgotten, when it was reported from up-stairs, that Miss W. had suddenly begun to *start* much, and throw her arms about, and mutter, and make faces, and speak "nonsense words," and dance oddly, the which was all of equally novel occurrence and bad example in the nursery, not to say that it moreover called in question the state of the wits of the said Miss W. When all this proved to be a wonderfully correct imitation of what the child had seen and heard at the Opera four months before, the astonishment of her parents may be imagined. They were tempted to take her to the Opera again; and when we saw her, she had seen that performance three or four times.

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* We were acquainted with a curious instance of the same thing in a child in Edinburgh; indeed the result is to be looked for.

Of this unaccountable interval of apparent meditative preparation, we have an instance from no less an authority than Plutarch. *Plutarch* relates, that a parrot belonging to a barber in Rome, was remarkably talkative and amusing, and the neighbors used to gather round to hear its performances; till one day a procession happened to pass, accompanied with a band of music, trumpets, cymbals, and other noisy instruments, which so astonished the parrot, that he continued silent for the space of three days. The barber and his neighbors were lamenting the want of their ordinary amusement, and began to fear that the parrot would never speak again, when all on a sudden, at the end of the before-mentioned period, Poll broke out into a most correct imitation of the whole processional band, and gave the braying of the trumpets, the jingling of the cymbals, with drums and all other accompaniments, in grand style. Plutarch concludes, that, during the period of silence, the bird had been employed in meditating, and preparing in his mind, the extraordinary exhibition which he afterwards made of his imitative powers.

Miss W.'s imitations were quite impartial. She had been present at a harvest-home, and had seen an Irish reaper and his daughter execute severally a pas-seul, in the form of a hornpipe or jig, in a highly characteristic manner. She gave us the one after the other to the minutest inelegance which had been perpetrated; and it was quite evident, throughout both movements, to which of the two performers every step and hobble belonged. When the lady, she wrapped up a handkerchief into a globular form, which ever and anon she applied to the heated brow and importunate nose; and, although all present were moved to laughter, not the slightest external mark of it appeared on the features of this curious child. This we could only impute to the suppressing power of Secretiveness; for a very considerable development of the organ of *Wit*, put insensibility to the ludicrous, in her, quite out of the question. There is no emotion whose outward expression is more difficult of concealment than laughter; yet we all know the gravity with which players go through the most ludicrous scenes. Liston's solemnity, for example, which he generally pushes the length of an idiotical expression, is in such monstrous incongruity with the matter he has in hand, that it often overcomes the gravity of the other performers, whose surrender is always a great additional amusement to the spectators. Liston's Secretiveness is uncommonly large.

Miss W. never witnessed the feats of a ventriloquist; but if she should, and should not produce the vocal illusion of ventriloquism as perfectly as she would imitate all the gestures and movements, we should seek the reason in her inferior endowment of Time, without which, as we above observed, the distinctions of sound are not sufficiently determined. She has every other faculty for the ventriloquial accomplishment, in equal endowment with M. Alexandre, with a reflecting development decidedly superior.

There is another of his Majesty's liege subjects worthy of remark in a phrenological view,—a Master Joseph Burke, *aged six years*, who leads the band at the theatre in a long and intricate overture of Rossini's, plays the violin with very considerable power of expression and execution, and performs Lingo in "The Agreeable Surprise," Murtoch Delany in "The Irishman in London," and various other parts. I went on Tuesday night to see him, and, after the overture, he came into the box where I was sitting, along with his father and mother. He is one of the finest little fellows I ever saw; not tall of his age—rather the reverse—*but with a head equal in size to that of most full-grown men.* The breadth above the ear is particularly great; I should think it at least six inches; and, in putting my hand to it, I found *Secretiveness* quite prominently large. The occipital region (Amativeness, Philoprogenitiveness, Concentrativeness, Adhesiveness, and Combativeness) is very full, and Firmness is also large; but it was a large head every way. I could not see the forehead well on account of his hair, but I plainly saw that the lower part of his forehead was all full. His performance on the violin is wonderful, certainly, for so young a child; but in musical precocity he has a rival in the Infant Lyra. His acting likewise has a parallel in Clara Fisher's; but, as uniting the two talents, he must be allowed to be the greatest wonder of the three. His acting is remarkable for nothing so much as the *determined gravity* with which he keeps his countenance, while the whole audience, and even the actors themselves, are convulsed with laughter. When in Lingo he makes love to Cowslip the dairy-maid, the actress who performed that character was quite unable to keep her countenance, when he was straddling up to a chair to seat himself beside her; but all the time he never moved a muscle. This is an additional instance of Secretiveness being found in a talent for acting; indeed, I am more and more satisfied that it is one of the most essential ingredients of that talent.

Master Burke, his mother informed us, is very fond of drawing, and is also an excellent dancer; but in other matters, such as reading and general information, he is quite a child, and not more forward than other children of his age. He seems to have the best dispositions possible,—did everything he was desired by his parents, and went to everybody who wished to take notice of him, with the utmost good humor.

II.

ABDOMINAL PRESSURE IN OBSTETRICS.

The custom of applying a bandage or swathe to a female *after* accouchment, is general, if not universal. It is not, however, so commonly known as it ought to be, that the same application, vigorously made, is a great aid to the expulsive efforts of the uterus. Pressure by the hand of a friend is almost always inefficiently applied; and much time might be saved the practitioner, and much suffering the patient, if nurses were taught to press with sufficient force, and in the right direction, and at the proper times, on the uterus, during the pains of parturition.

The following statement from the London Review, contains a practical lesson on this mode of procedure.

Mr. M'Morris, a medical officer in the East India Company's service, writes to us as follows. " In one of the numbers of the Medico-Chirurgical Review for 1828, I find a bandage proposed by Mr. Gaitskell for obstetric purposes. I have no doubt it will facilitate the parturient powers of Nature by the support and pressure which it affords. It is a common auxiliary among the native women on this side of the Indian peninsula, when the progress of labor is slow. Some of the female attendants, in such cases, place their hands on the abdomen of the parturient patient, and press it pretty violently downwards towards the pubes, having first rubbed it with castor oil. This operation is continued till the child is expelled, which generally happens soon after the mechanical pressure is commenced. If the secundines are not expelled with the fœtus, the woman is left to rest, with a bandage applied pretty tightly round the abdomen. I have been astonished, in some cases that I have witnessed, to observe the increase of the expulsive pains soon after this process is put in force."

III.

MEDICAL LITERATURE.

For the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

" Much study is a weariness to the flesh, and of reading many books there is no end."

AMONG all the numerous volumes which weigh down the shelves of a Medical Library, how much is there entirely useless ;—in how very small a space might all that is really valuable be comprised! We have voluminous treatises on every branch of medical science, many of which indeed contain something valuable ; but amidst how much dross, are the few particles of pure gold concealed !

An author generally writes more for his own fame (if no more sordid motive, such as the desire of filling his purse, set his pen in motion), than for the good of society. Hence, when a person undertakes to write a full treatise, you find him telling you not what is fact,—not the well-known truths of science, the real metal,—but he must display his erudition by giving you the history of error succeeding error, from age to age, until you begin to be of opinion that the healing art is all a mere matter of conjecture. The author next gives you the opinions of himself, which he supports at full length ; and then proceeds to refute the opinions of his adversaries. Thus, most probably, a large portion of his work is occupied in discussions of a question, which, if settled, would be after all of trifling value. Medicine indeed is not alone in this particular. Theologians, of all ages, have produced tome upon tome, of ponderous dimensions, upon unimportant points; and entered with so much eagerness into these discussions, that the simple and beautiful truths of religion have been almost lost in the obscurity of metaphysics ;—so that no one can find the truth but by appealing to the small volume which is its fountain head.

Happily, in Medicine, as in Theology, there are some plain and important truths which common sense points out too obviously to be mistaken ; so that in the same manner as the moral principle renders many men benevolent in spite of an erroneous creed, physicians of observation act rightly in their practice, in direct opposition to their theory.

The other Sciences have shared the same fate as Medicine and Theology. But it is with those that relate to Medicine, that we have to do, in our present article. Anatomy and Chemistry are, in some degree, exact sciences; hence the works upon these are more valuable than upon the other branches of medical education. Anatomy, especially, does not admit of much theorizing. Still the numerous works which are continually coming forth, prove that none of them has as yet advanced very near to perfection. Charles Bell's Anatomy * contains, indeed, most that is necessary to be known upon this branch, and the Physician need not be in possession of any other. So of several other systems of Anatomy. But where is there a complete treatise upon Surgery, which answers, by itself, for the Medical Student, or for reference for the Surgeon ? Where is there a work upon the Practice of Medicine, which would answer this purpose ? The young surgeon or physician may look through treatise after treatise, without finding information upon the particular subject he wishes. If he does, it is ten to one that the instructions he finds are erroneous, and the method of cure pointed out long since exploded ; and this, when he consults only standard works. He is lost in a labyrinth of doubt and perplexity. He is compelled to close the volume, and seek in his own brain the method of procedure ; unless he determine to confide in some one author—and then, most probably, he will be led into error. Thus every physician and every surgeon is obliged to form for himself an original mode of practice, guided only by general principles.

One great source of the imperfection of medical works, is, that practical men spend their lives in a round of professional duties ; and at their death, most of the knowledge they have acquired perishes with them. Thus those who are best qualified to write, have not the opportunity ; and the task is left to theorists. If, however, every physician should habituate himself to keep a correct account of all his cases, and briefly note down his observations upon them, Medical Science would advance much more rapidly. The Commentaries of Heberden—a work which is a simple statement of facts, without an attempt to support any theories —is one of the most valuable works that we possess. One advantage of this plan would be, that the practitioner, not intending immediately to publish his cases, would more readily record them as they occurred, without suppressing or garnishing. As it is at present, those who publish cases suppress most of those which terminate unfavorably, and distort those that

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* The edition published in London, 1829, contains a full account of his discoveries upon the Nerves, and plates illustrative of them.

they publish, so as to exhibit their own practice most favorably, or confirm their own theories. What confidence can be placed, then, in the statement of a medical author?

Let us not, however, be mistaken. Our remarks refer principally to foreign works; for of them the great body of our Medical Literature consists. Nor would we accuse these writers so much of insincerity, as of seeing through a medium favorable to their own opinions or practice.

There is another deficiency in medical works. They are not sufficiently practical. The student can only acquire the *principles* of practice from books; he must derive his practical *knowledge* from sources which are not always at hand,—from the lectures or advice of experienced practitioners; still more from his own experiments upon the living subject.

There is a method that seems to us calculated to remedy these evils; though we do not suppose it will ever be adopted here. Suppose a Society, such as the Massachusetts Medical Society, or the Boston Medical Association, should appoint a number of practical men to form a sort of Digest of Medical Practice. Let them draw, from the best works of the present age, and from their own practice, the general principles of medicine, the plain history of each disease, and the method of treatment most generally adopted. This need comprise no other diseases than those met with in America, and all of these which are peculiar to sections of the country should be treated by themselves. Perhaps it would be still better to confine the treatise to New England only, and leave it to other parts of the country to prepare treatises for themselves, if they should approve the example. Into this work, no two theories on the same subject should be admitted; where one cannot be agreed upon, let none be given. This work, after being approved by the Society, should be adopted as a standard. Treatises upon the other branches should then be formed in the same way. Of course, the works which we already have would not be thus thrown into disrepute. The advantage would be, that we should gain one complete work on each Science, which would contain something like truth. These treatises might be revised from time to time, and additions made of new discoveries, when they had become generally adopted.

As it is at present, truth and error are indiscriminately blended; and on the shelves of a medical library you will find them combined in proportions of at least four parts error to one part truth. The glorious uncertainty of Law is nothing to the glorious uncertainty of Medicine. Z.

IV.

PUERPERAL FEVER TERMINATING FATALLY.

To the Editor of the Boston Med. and Surg. Journal.

DEAR SIR,—As there is no subject which pertains to *disease*, that is not more or less interesting to the medical practitioner, I have thought proper to communicate to you a single *case*, which to me was of an interesting nature, that occurred within the circle of my practice the past season, together with the symptoms and treatment. Should you think it worthy of notice, you are at perfect liberty to give it a place in your useful Journal.

Very respectfully,

CALEB PIERCE.

Madrid, N. Y. Feb. 15, 1831.

Mrs. Harriet Morse, aged 27 years, of a healthy and sound constitution, was delivered of a healthy child at the natural period of gestation, on Sunday, Aug. 23d, 4 o'clock, P. M. Had a comfortable and quick labor as at any previous time—having been the mother of four children before. She remained comfortable, and no symptoms appeared to excite alarm, until Tuesday morning, 4 o'clock, A.M., when I was sent for. Arrived, and found symptoms as follows: — Fever, ushered in with severe cold chills; severe pain in head and back, with thirst, &c.; occasionally says she feels "sharp cutting pains" in the region of the uterus, restlessness, &c.; pulse 90, full and wiry. Vs. 20 oz.; blood highly inflamed. Had taken a cathartic of epsom salts the day before, which as yet had not operated. Gave calomel, 25 grs., which was followed with ol. ricini in two hours. —12 o'clock, had an active operation from the medicine.—Evening, visited my patient. Symptoms more favorable: pulse 80, soft; less fever, with an abatement of pain; bowels loose, and not bloated. Dov. pulv. 4 grs. Rested well, and a free and active perspiration was restored upon the surface.—12 o'clock, night, complains of some increase of pain in the region of *uterus*; no perspiration; increase of fever, thirst, &c.; lochia continues with some color.— 1 o'clock, pain increased; restlessness; tumefaction of the bowels, and some enlargement of the uterus. —2 o'clock, pain severe; restlessness; fever; countenance expressive of great anxiety; pulse 109, full and hard; complains of great soreness and tenderness of the uterus; limbs drawn up in bed; says she "cannot be moved." Vs. 29 oz. Calomel 40 grs., with two grains opium. Two hours after, Solut. Tart. Antimony. Fomentations to the abdomen, &c.—10 o'clock, A.M., calomel operated well. 12 o'clock, symptoms no better.

Notwithstanding my patient had been bled 49 oz., taken 65 grs. calomel, &c., in thirtyfive hours, there was not the least mitigation or amelioration in her symptoms. In this hour of distress, and at this stage of the disease, three neighboring physicians were called as associate counsel, who, after examining the nature of the case and existing symptoms, approved of treatment, and still recommended a perseverance in the general treatment as the only alternative.

At this time, pulse 119, rising; fever high; tongue dry and coated. Vs. 22 oz.; blood highly inflamed.—1 o'clock, P. M., pulse 132. Blister to the abdomen. Injections Sal. Epsom per anum every two hours, with saturated laudanum. 20 grs. antimony, 4 oz. water, a tablespoonful every hour.—5 o'clock, less fever and thirst. Antimony omitted, and Dov. pulv. substituted. Bowels continue loose, but tumefaction remains the same as before.—Thursday morning: rested well through the night; less fever. Complains of no pain or soreness in the region of the uterus; very little thirst; pulse 95, soft. Complains occasionally of being drowsy, probably from the use of Dov. pulv. Continued the medicine as yesterday.—5 o'clock, P. M., breasts full and drawn.

From this period until Friday evening, 8 o'clock, we had anticipated no unfavorable issue in her case, and had prognosticated a speedy convalescence. But, alas! how soon were our fondest hopes and expectations blasted! In an hour when our fears had been dispelled, we were unexpectedly presented with the following symptoms: — Bowels bloated; flatulency; fever; vomiting, &c.; pulse 115. Fifteen drops laudanum, with 100 drops comp. spts. lavender, given to quiet the irritability of the stomach. Injections, with laudanum, continued as before. Complains of great pain in the region of the uterus, and over the abdomen generally, increased on the slightest motion. Pain resembles, in a great degree, regular labor pains.—Saturday: pulse 145; bowels moved, from the injections. Great nervous irritability prevailed, notwithstanding the free and liberal use of antispasmodics. Complains of great soreness in the region of the uterus; and at this juncture of disease, a person ignorant of the true nature of the case would suppose her to be in actual *labor*. The enlargement of the bowels is exceedingly great, resembling, in appearance, a womb in the advanced stages of pregnancy. Her cries and groans are the most distressing. "My God!" says she, "I cannot endure it." Symptoms continued to increase in severity until Sunday. Pulse 159, vomiting, &c. The stomach does not contain the least kind of liquid or nourishment. Injections of yeast per vaginam and per anum, with the addition of laudanum. The irritability of the stomach is so far quieted that a dose of ol. ricini was given, and retained on the stomach; three hours after, operated well. Stools *dark* and *fetid*.—6 o'clock: hiccough; cold sweats; cold extremities; slight delirium. Warm bath, but to no effect. Brandy externally, wine, &c., as much as the stomach would bear. — 12 o'clock, sinking, although her muscular strength is astonishingly great; requires one or two persons to keep her in bed. Screams and groans loud—says her pains are like the "*cutting of a knife.*" Still is rational, and thinks she is dying. Begs of us to cut into her side to ease her distress. Says she feels as though she might be "*delivered of something that would mitigate her pain.*" — 4 o'clock, with all the train of aggravated symptoms possible for man to describe, with perfect composure of mind, she suddenly fell asleep in *death*. Thus closed the life of a dutiful wife, a tender mother, and a valuable friend.

Owing to objections on the part of friends, *postmortem* examination was not made.

V.

BLACKNESS OF THE TONGUE.

Letter to the Editor of the Boston Med. and Surg. Journal, from a distinguished and highly valued personal and professional friend.

Dear Sir,—I noticed with some interest, in the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal of the 20th inst., an account of a patient, who, when *recovering* from a peripneumony, found his tongue and his feces blackened, in a degree which led to a suspicion that some latent cause was at work of an unfavorable description. It was, however, finally discovered to be merely owing to the pulp of apples boiled in an *iron* sauce-pan; which pulp the patient used for moistening his mouth, while at the same time he occasionally took tea,—the tannin of which last article, forming a black oxyde with materials derived from the iron sauce-pan, by means of the apples, produced the appearances in question. The proof of this fact was obtained by boiling the apples in an *earthen* pot, when no such color was produced.—Such is the statement in the Journal.

Within the last two or three weeks, something resembling this has happened to myself.—Some of the fish caught in the river near us, of the size of a smelt, and vulgarly called *Frost-fish*, or *Tom-cod*, were (in the absence of other fish) repeatedly brought to our table, having been broiled on a grid-*iron*. Now I observed at this time, that, though I was in my usual good health, my feces were black; but I simply attributed this to the *dark color of the broiled skins of the fish*, as I had often observed my feces to be light colored after drinking milk. But since reading the above article in the Journal in question, I have recollected that a large pig having been killed in our family, which yielded several pieces of roasted pork, apple-sauce was made to accompany each piece, of which I ate *very liberally*. As the *apples* were boiled in a *copper* vessel lined with tin (though indeed somewhat imperfectly), impregnation from iron was here out of the question, as regarded the apples; but the grid-*iron* might easily communicate chalybeate qualities to the skin of the *fish*. Now when these two articles were introduced into the intestines, one after the other, there to meet for the *first time*, the *tongue* indeed might remain uncolored; but not so the materials in the *intestines*, especially if they were there aided by gall, heat, &c.—You will please to recollect, that, in eating apples or pears with an iron or steel knife, a stain of black is sometimes left on the blade; which is a circumstance corroborating the above supposition.—I should add, that on each day I drank a small tumbler of genuine cider; but cider, it is to be presumed, exhibits a very modified resemblance to the *unfermented juice* of the apple.

As we do not often hear of incidents like those above described, it is possible that where they occur, some singularity of temperament may exist. It may even be necessary that apples, or fish, or iron, of a peculiar quality, should be employed to produce the results in question; or the iron may be in different states of cleanliness: and it is under these impressions that the above remarks are made. In any event, we must admit that small circumstances may sometimes produce singular effects; that it is difficult, in some cases, to foresee such effects, and yet pleasant to seek after their explanations when they occur. In other words, there can be no evil in keeping the mind always *alert* as to facts and their causes, where it may tend to quiet needless alarms.

I am, my dear sir, yours, with great truth, * * *

Jan. 29, 1831.

MEDICAL JOURNAL.

BOSTON, MARCH 8, 1831.

INFANT ACTING.

Our leader this week consists of detached extracts from an article published in the Edinburgh Phrenological Journal, in 1825. The object of the article was to show that scenic and ventriloquial power are derived from a large endowment of Imitation and Secretiveness; that they consist in a union, in an individual, of extraordinary powers of imitation, to enable him to assume the appearance, voice, &c., of another—and of concealment, by which he may mask himself, and suppress the expression of any emotions which may be excited in his own mind. Whether this explanation be correct or otherwise, the part we have extracted will derive an interest from its allusions to the early history of a genius who has recently astonished us by his displays of histrionic excellence, and of a lady who preceded him in the same remarkable course. In her subsequent career, we may see an indication of what will probably be the sequel of his.

THE STUDY OF ANATOMY IN THE MASS. MED. COLLEGE.

One improvement, like one indulgence, generally leads to another. We noticed, in a late newspaper, a suggestion, purporting to be made by a medical student, that the arrangements in Mason Street are not altogether satisfactory to the classes. The subjects of complaint are, first, that the whole duties of lecturing on Anatomy and Surgery, are required of a single individual, whose time is notoriously in demand by an extensive and most respectable private practice; and, second, that no provision is made for an anatomical demonstrator.

In most Medical Schools, Anatomy and Surgery are taught by separate professors, and where the resources of the Institution will justify such division, it is unquestionably desirable; but in the present state of things in this community, and at our Medical College, its expediency is at least doubtful. The evil necessarily resulting from the union of these two professorships, might be better remedied, at present, in the way suggested by the writer referred to—viz., the prolongation of the course. Excepting in schools very recently established, we do not recollect an instance, but in Boston, in which the lectures continue so short a term as three months. In most cases, instruction is given double that time; and were it continued in our college a month longer than it is, the students would be better taught, and both pupils and professors better satisfied with the result of their labors. If any change is to be made—and, from the state of feeling and opinion among medical men, it may be justly inferred that some changes will ere long be effected—the one here proposed seems preferable to the other. It accords more, too, with the experience of other schools; for, though few, as before remarked, are open for so short a time as three months in the year, yet in many we find a single individual lecturing on Anatomy and Surgery. This was the case at that celebrated Hospital in London, where Sir Astley Cooper acquired so much of his reputation, and imparted so much of his hard-earned knowledge; if we mistake not, Mr. Abernethy found no difficulty in discharging similar duties: yet the private practice of both these gentlemen was by no means a sinecure—equal, certainly in extent, and probably in laboriousness, to that of the distinguished Surgeon who fills the same chair at the College in Mason Street.

Respecting the second improvement proposed, we fully agree that it cannot be made too speedily. The writer of the article in question, who it seems has been an inmate of the school, has felt, in common with his fellows, the want of a guide in dissection, and hence is led to speak in the language of complaint. But it did not occur to him, probably, that the Corporation would have placed themselves in an awkward predicament, by appointing an anatomical demonstrator, when the pursuit of anatomical study was forbidden by the laws of the State under which the Corporation act. Any privileges the students may have enjoyed in this way, have been the free offering of the individuals connected with the School;—not known, or certainly not recognised, by the University, and afforded them at the expense of much personal anxiety and responsibility. It would therefore be in better spirit for them to be thankful for what little they have enjoyed, than to complain that their privileges, in this pursuit, have not been greater.

Things, however, have now changed. The legal restraints are removed, which fettered alike the student and his teacher. The veil of secrecy is in a measure withdrawn from these studies, and they may now, and ought and doubtless will, be conducted with system; for the public have a right to expect that the greatest possible amount of information will be drawn from the sources, limited as they are, it has now opened to the profession.

In those countries where a liberal policy has been pursued on this subject, we find dissections conducted with a degree of precision which is almost burdensome. In France, e. g., with the study of practical anatomy is associated a director, inspector, demonstrator, conservator, dessignateur-peintre, modeller, &c. But all these officers must be paid, and many of them are unnecessary. The demonstrator, however, is indispensable. Besides the importance of his services to the pupils, his occupation is preparing him for a more elevated place; and affording, in fact, the only preparation which can enable a man to lecture on Anatomy in the manner it ought to be taught in every medical institution. Those great men who have contributed most largely to the improvement of anatomical and physiological science, have most of them been trained in this responsible office: and its existence among us, and its administration by men of good talents, thorough education, patience in research, acuteness in observing, and aptness in describing, appear to us important for the credit of the profession, for the interests of science, and the good of the community.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Corporation of the University will lose no time in making their arrangements correspond with the more enlightened policy adopted by the State Government; that they will place the anatomical department in a condition worthy the general resort of our medical students, and the extended patronage of an enlightened Legislature.

ACTION OF AIR ON BLOOD.

The changes induced by respiration in the composition of the air, seem destined to constitute an exhaustless field of physiological inquiry. Belonging at once to the domain of physiology and of chemistry, this topic has engaged, in its elucidation, the powers of the greatest minds in both these departments of science. There is scarcely an eminent name in the history of either, for the last twenty years, which might not be quoted in connection with this single subject. It is not our intention, at present, to review the labors of these distinguished individuals, or to enumerate the various sources of doubt and difficulty with which the investigation has been attended. Our immediate object is, simply to state to our readers the latest point of controversy, and perhaps not the least interesting, which this prolific subject has furnished. It is agreed, on all hands, that the air which is expired from the lungs, differs essentially, in its composition, from that of the atmosphere. The precise nature of the change effected cannot be stated with entire confidence; but the following result, obtained by Davy, is sufficiently accurate for our present purpose. That philosopher states, as the result of his experiments, that about thirteen cubic inches of air are inhaled by a healthy man at each inspiration, consisting of nine and a half inches of nitrogen, three and four-tenths of oxygen, and one-tenth of an inch of carbonic acid. The bulk of air expired is somewhat less, or twelve inches and three-fourths; of which nine and three-tenths are nitrogen, two and two-tenths oxygen, and one and two-tenths carbonic acid.

Now without entering into the vexatæ quæstiones of retained oxygen, the source of animal heat, or the formation of vapor, it would seem to follow, as a necessary inference from the above facts, that a certain amount of carbon is furnished to the inspired air by the venous blood in the lungs, by which a part of its oxygen is converted into carbonic acid. With regard to the blood itself, it is equally obvious to infer, that a part of its carbon is withdrawn by the action of the atmosphere; and as, in passing from the venous to the arterial system, the color of the blood is known to undergo a material alteration, this has naturally come to be considered a part of the chemical change thus effected, and that as the lighter red color results from the decarbonization, this is equally a necessary effect of the exposure of venous blood to the atmospheric air. This conclusion has been thought to receive full confirmation from the phenomenon which occurs, when blood, drawn from a vein, is agitated in contact with the atmosphere. Under these circumstances, its dark color is found to be exchanged for a brighter hue; and no doubt has been entertained or expressed that a corresponding change takes place in its proportion of carbon.

Within a short time, however, a distinguished chemist, Dr. Davy, has undertaken to throw some new light on this part of the subject, and to prove that, properly speaking, no chemical action follows when blood is exposed to atmospheric air; that the process which takes place in the lungs is vital, and depends on vital causes; and that when blood drawn from a vein is exposed, no chemical change occurs until putrefaction commences: that the color of the blood is not altered; that no oxygen disappears from the air, and no carbonic acid is formed in it. The apparent effect of agitation in changing the color, is referred, by Dr. D., to the froth which, under these circumstances, collects on the surface, and which, when it subsides, leaves the blood—according to him—of its original color. Dr. D. adds, in confirmation of this idea, that agitation of the blood in hydrogen gas produces precisely a similar effect.

Such are the observations of Dr. Davy; and if confirmed by others, they would show that there has existed, on this subject, an error as remarkable as universally diffused. On repeating similar experiments, however, other chemists have not arrived at similar conclusions. In a late able article in the Edinburgh Journal, Dr. Christison details the results of some experiments which tend strongly to confirm the common opinion. As respects the change of color, indeed, it seems impossible to adduce any proof beyond the naked fact. The blood was found, by Dr. C., as it has been observed by others, to become brightly red, on agitation in the air, and to retain this color for more than a day, sometimes even for four days. The difference in tint was, in fact, so obvious, that it could not be mistaken at the distance of thirty feet.

To ascertain the change produced in the chemical character of the blood, Dr. C. instituted the following experiment:—The blood was made to pass from the vein, in a full stream, into a bottle, into which some bits of lead were introduced, and which, when entirely filled, was closed with a glass stopper having a very small groove in one side. The lead being shaken in the bottle, collected nearly all the fibrin, while no air gained admission to the blood, except what entered by the groove as the blood cooled and contracted. Ten cubic inches of blood, prepared in this way, were transferred to another bottle, whose capacity was 23 cubic inches, and which had two orifices, both provided with stopcocks, and one connected with a tube opening under the surface of mercury. When the stopcock of this orifice was opened, the mercury rose in the tube, showing that the air on which the blood had acted was reduced in amount, or, as Dr. C. expresses it, was in part absorbed. The air thus altered was subsequently expelled from the bottle, by means of water introduced through the other orifice, and, being collected over mercury, was carefully analyzed. The amount of absorption, under these circumstances, varied, in different experiments, from .32 of a cubic inch to 1.14. The formation of carbonic acid was distinctly proved by its action on potass and baryta. The quantity, however, was small, not exceeding .25 of a cubic inch. It has indeed been shown, by Dr. Davy himself, that the serum of the blood has a strong solvent power over carbonic acid, and that it will absorb more than its own volume of this gas, so that the small quantity which was evident in the residual air is easily accounted for.

NEW VETERINARY HOSPITAL.

We understand that a Veterinary Hospital is to be attached to Col. Jaques' stock farm, at the Ten Hills, Medford; and that a gentleman will be sent out by Mr. Coleman, Professor of the Veterinary College, England, qualified to practise this art, and give instruction in it to others. Such a man is very much wanted here. The study of comparative anatomy, and the different effects of the same medicine upon different animals, particularly those which are esteemed valuable, are subjects interesting to all, and especially so to the medical profession. An annual course of lectures upon these subjects, delivered in Boston, would be very useful; and most of our medical students, particularly those who are to practise in the country, would find it very much for their interest to attend such a course, could it be given by an intelligent, well-educated, and experienced Professor.

The following case, related in Rust's Magazine, is something of a poser to Mr. Halsted's old notion redivivus about kneading, shampooing, &c. &c.

Stomach almost entirely converted into Cartilage.—A woman had had a tumor in the abdomen for twelve years; it was moveable, of a round shape, and had been unanimously declared, by several medical men who examined it, to be a scirrhous ovary. This patient, who had never had nausea, vomiting, nor any of the other symptoms by which scirrhus of the stomach is usually indicated, at length died; and on opening the body, it was found that the tumor was formed by the stomach converted into cartilage, which was an inch thick on the anterior surface, and it was only at the posterior part that a small membranous portion was discovered, less indurated and not so thick. The cartilaginous parietes of the viscus could not have performed any movement, and it would thus appear that motion on the part of the stomach is not essential to digestion. The preparation is deposited in the Royal Museum at Paris.

Boylston Prizes.—It will be seen by an advertisement on our outer page, that the Essays for these Prizes must be sent to Dr. Warren the present year, in consequence of the death of Dr. Welsh, late Chairman of the Boylston Committee. The time for receiving them is on or before the first Wednesday in April next.

Whole number of deaths in Boston the week ending Feb. 26th, 16. Males, 8—Females, 7. Stillborn, 1.

Of consumption, 3; croup, 2; old age, 1; apoplexy, 1; fever, 1; lung fever, 2; unknown, 4; cholera infantum, 1.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

BOYLSTON MEDICAL PRIZE QUESTIONS. The Boylston Medical Committee of Harvard University hereby give notice, that in consequence of the death of their late Chairman, Thomas Welsh, M. D. the Dissertations for the present year must be forwarded, post paid, to John C. Warren, M. D. Boston, on or before the first Wednesday of April next. GEORGE HAYWARD, Secretary.
Boston, March 3d, 1831. March 8. 2w.

NOTICE. Those gentlemen who are yet indebted for the 1st vol. of the Med. and Surg. Journal, from Feb., 1828, to Feb., 1829, are hereby notified, that, after four weeks, the Proprietors of that Volume have authorized Mr. S. Smith to collect all that is due to them for it; and the present Proprietor respectfully requests that those indebted to him for the Medical Intelligencer, and the 2d and 3d vols. of the Med. and Surg. Journal, will forward all arrears. JOHN COTTON.

The subscribers above mentioned for said 1st vol., are hereby requested to remit payment for the same to the subscriber, at the office of the Boston Daily Advertiser.
SAMUEL SMITH, Agent for said Proprietors.
March 1, 1831.

COPARTNERSHIP NOTICE. The subscribers have formed a connexion in business as CHEMISTS, DRUGGISTS & APOTHECARIES, at Apothecaries' Hall, No 188 Washington Street, opposite Marlboro' Hotel, under the firm of JARVIS & PEIRSON.
NATHAN JARVIS.
GEORGE W. PEIRSON.

EUROPEAN LEECHES.

J. & P. have a few fine European Leeches—to the application of which, when directed by Physicians, they will attend without any additional charge.
Feb. 8.

WILLIAMS ON DISEASES OF THE CHEST. This day received, by CARTER & HENDEE, "A Rational Exposition of the Physical Signs of the Diseases of the Lungs and Pleura, illustrating their Pathology and facilitating their Diagnosis." By CHARLES J. B. WILLIAMS. Dec. 6.

BECLARD'S GENERAL ANATOMY. CARTER, HENDEE & BABCOCK have this day received—Elements of General Anatomy, or a Description of every kind of Organ composing the Human Body. By P. A. BECLARD, Professor of Anatomy of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris. Preceded by a critical and biographical Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Author. By OLIVIER, M.D. Translated from the French, with Notes. By JOSEPH TOGNO, M.D., Member of the Philadelphia Medical Society. Dec. 28.

SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS AND CHEMICALS. Students in want of the above articles, would do well to call, before purchasing, at BREWER & BROTHERS', Nos. 90 and 92 Washington Street—Boston. Oct. 15. ep3m

ABERCROMBIE ON DISEASES OF THE STOMACH. Just received by CARTER & HENDEE—Pathological and Practical Researches on Diseases of the Stomach, the Intestinal Canal, the Liver, and other Viscera of the Abdomen. By JOHN ABERCROMBIE, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, &c., and first Physician to his Majesty in Scotland. Sept. 28.

SURGEON DENTIST'S MANUAL. Just received, by CARTER & HENDEE, The Surgeon Dentist's Anatomical and Physiological Manual. By G. WAITE, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons. Nov. 2.

Published weekly, by JOHN COTTON, at 184 Washington St. corner of Franklin St., to whom all communications must be addressed, *postpaid.*—Price three dollars per annum, if paid in advance, three dollars and a half if not paid within three months, and four dollars if not paid within the year. The postage for this is the same as for common newspapers.